An Essay
On the medicinal properties
Of the
Juniperus Sabina
And
Juniperus Virginiana
By
R. B. Alexander
of
Virginia. — Feby. 11th 1828.

Juniperus Sabina

The sabina is an ever-green shrub, and a native of Siberia and Tartary. Of this plant, there are many varieties; In his valuable work, the American Dispensatory, Professor Coxe treats of four, and several other species are mentioned by other authors.

Their sensible and medicinal properties are so nearly allied that the savin being considered the most active is alone retained in our lists of medicines. The leaves and tops have a moderately strong smell, of a disagreeable kind, they give out a great portion of

their active principle to water, and the whole to rectified spirit.

Decoctions of the leaves freed from the volatile principle have some degree of smell, but not resembling the plant itself. Both the tops and berries of this plant are employed in medicine, the latter however are usually preferred. Of their efficacy as a stomachic, carminative, diaphoretick and diuretic, there are several relations by physicians of great authority, and medicinal writers have spoken of the utility of the savin, in nephritic cases, Uterine obstructions, scorbutic affections, and some cutaneous diseases. It has been recommended as an anthelmintic, and is said to be

very efficient in the cure of chronic rheumatism, of podagra, and the disease usually denominated syphilitic rheumatism.—

As an emmenagogue, the savin has been much extolled; when taken internally, it produces a powerful determination to the uterine system, its properties are heating and actively stimulant, possessing a manifest tendency to promote the fluid secretions.— When employed in large doses, it is said to occasion great heat, agitation, and inflammation of the intestines, and hamorrhage from the uterus.—

It is probable however, that its effects, in this way have been overrated, for it has been often

known to fail as an emmenagogue. The testimony of Dr. Home in the use of this plant, at the Royal infirmary of Edinburg, is strongly in favor of its emmenagogue virtues. His success with this medicine appears to have been considerable, and more particularly in the cure of amenorrhœa.

Wedekind a german writer of respectability speaks highly of it; he recommends it in the atonic or relaxed state of the uterus, attended with preternatural secretions, which are sometimes met with in women of advanced age, and who have suffered much from child bearing and abortion.

In cases accompanied with extreme torpidity, or atony of the uterine system, the savin might no doubt be advantageously employed; but its administration in diseases attended with a high degree of phlogistic diathesis, owing to its stimulating properties, ought not to be counselled.

The testimony of Dr. Cullen, whose authority we are not disposed to question, has in some degree brought it into disrepute, both in England and in this country. He observes, "that the savin is a very heating substance, and I have been often upon account of these qualities, prevented from employing it in the quantity, perhaps, necessary to render it

emmenagogue. I must own however that it shews a more powerful determination to the uterus than any other plant I have employed; but I have been frequently disappointed in this, and its heating qualities always require a great deal of caution". —

The medicinal virtue of the savin is unquestionably manifest, when administered as a remedy in many other diseases. — In chronic rheumatism it has been employed with decided advantage. — European authors of great respectability, speak in the highest terms of its use in this disease. —

Professor Chapman we believe was the first who used it in this Country. His success in its employment, as well in chronic, as in that form of

disease usually denominated syphilitic rheumatism has been very considerable. — In treating on the virtues of this plant as a remediate agent in the cure of rheumatism, the Professor observes; "In no application of the Savin which I have hitherto made in rheumatism, was I able to perceive, any immediate advantage from it. The system must be fully under its impression before the disease begins to yield, even in a slight degree. Commencing with twelve or fifteen grains of the powdered leaves, three times a day, my rule is, gradually to increase the dose, till some positive effect is manifested, to produce which, three or four times the quantity I have mentioned, are sometimes demanded. Nor ought we too suddenly to withdraw the medicine in despair of its being useful. To

accomplish a cure of chronic rheumatism, especially, it must be continued several weeks. No matter how trivial the improvement may be, at first, we should not be discouraged. The extraordinary success, which I have seen result from its long and steady exhibition, entitles me to recommend, very confidently, an imitation of the same course". —

The savin has been much extolled by some writers for its remediate powers, when applied to old obstinate ulcers, either in the form of decoction or poultice. As an escharotic application to venereal warts, or other fungous excrescences the powdered savin has not been unfrequently prescribed, and an ointment

made of it, is one of the best applications, we possess, for keeping up a discharge from blistered surfaces.

Juniperus Virginiana
or red cedar.

Unlike the subject of the preceding article, this species rises into a tree of considerable size.

It is the largest of the junipers growing within the original limits of the United States.

It is an evergreen plant, and according to Michaux in his North American Sylva, it is found from Maine and from Lake Champlain without interruption to the cape of Florida. In the middle and

northern States it affects the most barren soils, being found in abundance upon dry rocky hills where scarcely any other tree can subsist. In Virginia, it grows to the height of thirty or forty feet and one or two feet in diameter, though on account of the value of its wood, it is seldom suffered to reach its full dimensions.

The leaves of the Juniperus Virginiana have a strong disagreable taste, with some pungency and bitterness. The peculiar taste and odor resides, no doubt in a volatile oil. The botanical similarity of this tree, to the savin, or European shrub, is evidenced in its foliage and external appear-

ance. In their sensible and medicinal qualities, they are nearly alied, but there is reason to believe that the oil of the Juniperus Virginiana is more active and energetic, and of a more stimulating character. It may be administered in all cases where the former is useful, and probably with equal advantage. As an anthelmintic, the apple of this plant, (commonly termed the cedar apple) has been highly recommended, as well by country practitioners, as by public prints. A series of well conducted experiments were instituted by a graduate of this University, and published in his inaugural essay of March '27; from the results of

which, it appeared, that as a remedy for worms, its power if not comparatively inert, was very equivocal.

Subsequent testimony, however has been adduced proving unquestionably, that it is not destitute of vermifuge properties. Several experiments performed on children, under my immediate observation, were so decidedly efficacious, that I can with little hesitation pronounce it not unworthy of further examination.

All parts of this plant contain volatile oil, which may be separated by distillation, or by decomposing the wood in earthen or iron vessels. That obtained from the wood is perhaps

preferable, and when employed in the cure of diseases, and especially that of chronic rheumatism, merits some consideration. From observation and experience, there is sufficient evidence of its powers to establish its just claims to attention as will be seen in the subsequent experiments.

Experiment 1.st

Elijah Clowe was attacked by chronic rheumatism in his right knee. The pain continued to increase in violence for several months, when his knee became so much contracted that he was unable to walk without the assistance of a stick or crutch.

I directed him to rub the

part affected for ten or fifteen minutes with essential oil of the juniperus virginiana moderately warmed; to be applied at night on going to bed.—

On the next day, he walked with perfect ease to himself and ~~and~~ according to his account, the pain left him in an hour after the application of the medicine.—

The remedy was continued several succeeding nights, and no symptoms of disease returning, the further employment of it, was deemed unnecessary.—

Experiment 2nd.

Elizabeth Davis aged 40.—

Case of chronic rheumatism. The disease principally confined to

the head; her pulse quick and feeble; her eyes inflamed, tears occasionally trickling down her cheeks, and her person much emaciated. I directed the external application of the Juniperus virginiana moderately warmed, as in the preceding experiment. By the use of this medicine, she was relieved of pain in a few days: her appetite improved, and her health restablished.

Experiment 3rd.

William, a black man aged 60. For many years, he had been a victim to chronic rheumatism. I directed the employment of the oil, in the ordinary form, but not with the same beneficial result. The pain was in

some degree relieved, but no cure effected, although the medicine was continued a sufficient length of time to test its efficacy.

Experiment 4th.

Like the subject of the preceding case Mrs. McLeod aged 45, was afflicted with chronic rheumatism.

From being fat and corpulent, she had become thin and emaciated; the disease appeared to direct its violence to the hands and feet, so much so, as to deprive her of the use of them. The usual remedies for rheumatism had been employed, without permanent benefit. By the external exhibition of the Juniperus Virginiana, as well as

a dose taken inwardly, she walked on the following day. The use of her limbs was perfectly restored in a short time by the use of the oil. ~

Experiment 5th.

James, a mulatto, aged 50. Confined by chronic rheumatism, so as to be unable to stir from bed.

By the external as well as internal use of the oil, its usual activity was displayed, and the patient had the satisfaction of a speedy recovery. ~

Experiment 6th.

James Baker, about 60 years of age. In this case the patient had been

afflicted for many years with chronic rheumatism. The oil was prescribed without real or apparent benefit.

Experiment 7th.

This case was reported to me by Edward A Shay, a respectable tobacconist of the District of Columbia; being well acquainted with him, I repose confidence in his statement. Agreeably to his report, he had been subject to violent attacks of acute rheumatism. On hearing ~~hearing~~ of the efficacy of the Juniperus Virginiana, in chronic rheumatism, he determined to employ it on himself in the acute form the dis-

case. He had been confined to his bed several weeks, with much swelling about his joints, his fever high, and pain considerable. — By the use of the oil, he was quickly relieved.

Experiment 8th.

The Juniperus Virginiana was employed by Mr Ray with the same beneficial result in a subsequent attack of acute rheumatism. He had been confined to his bed about a week; his pain acute, and the weight of the sheet, on the parts inflamed, was the cause of much uneasiness. —

Contrary to the advice of his physician, he made use of the oil, in the form of inunction, and on the next day, he was enabled to walk.

Ch

rea

to m

the

he

it c

to h

durc

at h

sugg

and

date

he c

thir-

heint

Virg

Experiment 9th.

Mr John Welsh, a member of the Medical Class in this University, suffered so much uneasiness and pain from a rheumatic affection of his feet, that he repeatedly declared, he found it impossible to devote due attention to his studies. — His pain, though acute during the day, was greatly increased at night when warm in bed; At my suggestion, he made use of the oil, and I have since recieved a Letter dated Frankford, informing me that he was perfectly relieved on the third application. —

From the preceding experiments we are led to infer, that the Virginiana, when administered in

the cure of chronic rheumatism, is a medicine of preeminent utility, and may hereafter become an important accession to the materia medica. — — In addition to the cases already advanced, I might mention many others, relieved and cured of chronic rheumatism, by the use of this remedy; but of which, I did not take memoranda at the time, not then anticipating that I should make it the subject of an essay. — Whether it is really calculated to be of service in acute rheumatism, I cannot speak from personal knowledge, having never used it. — It does, however, appear to be an anomaly that so heating and active a

stimulant, should be salutory, in the inflammatory form of this disease, but on this head, we are compelled to acknowledge, that there are many fallacies, in our opinions and theories. That the Balsom Copaiva may be prescribed in the inflammatory stage of gonorrhaa, Professor Chapman has long since taught us, and we all know, that the oleum terebinthina the most acrid, perhaps of all irritants, will allay the heat, soothe the pain, and arrest and subdue the inflammation of a burn. Other apparent anomalies might be mentioned, but it is unnecessary to dwell on them, before such learned and experienced judges. —